



Nathan Deal
Governor

Bobby Cagle, MSW
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DECAL welcomes 700th Early Learning Program for New “Quality Rated”

*The Sunshine House in Douglasville is 700th program to
voluntarily enlist in new rating program*

ATLANTA, Ga., (August 1, 2012) – Bobby Cagle, commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), announced today that in only six months, DECAL has met its first year goal of enrolling 700 child care programs in Quality Rated, Georgia’s new voluntary system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs.

The announcement was made today at a special reception held to mark the occasion with the Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) and United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, Quality Rated identifies early care and education programs that meet a set of standards exceeding the state’s minimum licensing requirements. The program launched in January, 2012.

The 700th program to enlist in Quality Rated was The Sunshine House on Fairburn Road in Douglasville, Georgia. “We are so honored to be the school to help Bright from the Start reach the goal of 700 Quality Rated providers statewide,” said Johanna Harper, director of The Sunshine House. “We are proud to represent Bright from the Start, and we look forward to reaching our own goal of attaining the highest quality rating for our school and all Sunshine House schools throughout Georgia.”

“As part of our ongoing efforts to not only meet, but far exceed state standards for early care and education, we are thrilled to have all 36 of our Georgia schools participate in the Quality Rated initiative,” said The Sunshine House Chief Executive Officer Dr. Margaret Mary Wilson. “This is an exciting time for all early childhood educators in Georgia, as we have the opportunity to raise the bar on child care and advocate the benefits of a quality rating and improvement system statewide.”

Commissioner Cagle said implementing Quality Rated is a priority for Governor Nathan Deal. “Governor Deal has clearly communicated his vision for a state where children attend quality early care and education programs that support the whole child and prepare them for ongoing success in life,” Cagle explained. “With 700 centers voluntarily enrolling in only six months, we can see how this program is being enthusiastically embraced by child care professionals across the state.”

“Quality Rated will award ratings at increasing levels to early care and education programs that meet defined program standards beyond Georgia’s minimum licensing requirements,” said Dr. Laura Johns, director of Quality Initiatives at DECAL. “Programs choosing to participate in Quality Rated become eligible for free professional development, technical assistance, and financial incentive packages funded in part by a \$2.4 million grant from the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation and the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta.”

The grant was recently awarded to the Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) who will administer three types of Quality Rated incentives to participating early care and education programs as they achieve higher levels of quality. The initial incentive of \$1,000.00 worth of materials is available to programs participating in technical assistance programs with local child care resource and referral agencies. The second incentive of \$500.00 is awarded to participating programs submitting a completed Quality Rated portfolio thereby agreeing to an onsite evaluation within 90 days using the Environment Rating Scales instrument. Bonus packages ranging in value from \$4,000 – \$6,000 are then awarded to programs who are rated at the entry, medium or high levels.

Parents whose children receive subsidized child care through the Childcare and Parents Services Program (CAPS) also win with Quality Rated. CAPS intends to implement tiered reimbursement in July, 2013 for Quality Rated programs that serve children receiving subsidized care. Tiered reimbursement means that child care subsidy payments will be based on the quality level of the program. The higher the Quality Rated level, the higher the subsidy reimbursement.

Mona Jackson, CAPS Director, hopes that tiered reimbursement will encourage eligible families to choose Quality Rated programs and that programs already participating in the subsidy program will enroll and participate in Quality Rated and become eligible for higher reimbursement payments. Governor Deal recently moved the CAPS program from the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) to DECAL.

“Federal subsidies that help eligible Georgians afford child care is now administered by DECAL,” explained DECAL’s Assistant Commissioner for Programs Carol Hartman. “In July, 2013, the state plans to begin using the federal money to offer increased child care reimbursements to higher-performing child care centers.” A quarter of Georgia children under age five years receive some kind of subsidized child care, according to a 2010 report by the Georgia Budget & Policy Institute.

Also in July, 2013, families will be able to verify if a provider is voluntarily agreeing to meet higher standards by participating in Quality Rated and to see the quality rating they have achieved by visiting the Bright from the Start website at www.decal.ga.gov.

Child care programs may learn more about Quality Rated at www.qualityrated.decal.ga.gov or by calling 1-855-800-7747. More information on CAPS can be found at www.compass.ga.gov or 404-657-3434.

About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.

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